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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2007

In Today's Papers

Abdullah Gul Elected Turkey's 11th President

All papers report Abdullah Gul won a third round of voting in parliament on Tuesday to become Turkey's next president. Gul, who was previously foreign minister, was elected with 339 votes in the 550-member Turkish Parliament. The main opposition CHP boycotted the voting. Kurdish party DTP and three independent lawmakers cast blank votes.

Papers report White House spokesman Scott Stanzel said President Bush called Gul to congratulate him on his election as president. Bush underlined the US commitment to maintain strong relations with Turkey as a friend and ally. The US Department of State said in a statement, "The successful completion of these elections is testament to the maturity of Turkish democracy and strength of the Turkish Constitution." US Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson released a message congratulating Gul's election as president. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso congratulated Gul, saying in a statement it was expected to give a "fresh and positive impetus to the EU accession process through progress in a number of key areas." German President Koehler, Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis, Russian President Putin and several other world leaders also sent messages of congratulations to Gul.

Gul Pledges to Defend Secular Republic

All papers report newly sworn-in President Gul said in his inaugural speech that he would uphold the "secular principles of the republic" and be an "impartial" head of state, pledging to exert every effort to ensure harmonious cooperation among state institutions. He stressed that secularism was a model for the coexistence of different lifestyles and a rule for preserving social peace. Gul also said Turkey must work harder on reforms in order to join the European Union.

In contrast to past inaugurations, the main opposition CHP, the military top brass, and several judiciary members as well as the

High Education Board (YOK) chairman stayed away from Gul's swearing-in ceremony.

Outgoing President Ahmet Necdet Sezer handed over his post in a brief ceremony held behind closed doors. Following the handover ceremony, Gul hosted a reception attended by Prime Minister Erdogan, Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan, members of parliament and foreign diplomats. Gul's wife Hayrunnisa Gul, whose Islamic-style headscarf had been the focus of heated debate, attended neither the swearing-in at parliament nor the handover ceremony at the presidential palace.

Mainstream Hurriyet says, with the presidential oath, Gul pledged to abide by Ataturk's principles and secularism. "Never forget your oath," liberal Radikal says in a banner front-page headline. Islamist-oriented Zaman and Yeni Safak welcome Gul becoming president, with Zaman announcing the beginning of "the Gul Era." Hurriyet reports GATA military medical academy in Ankara has invited Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan to join a graduation ceremony together with his wife, whereas Gul and Erdogan, whose wives wear headscarves, were invited to come alone.

Editorial Commentary on Gul Assuming Presidency
Fikret Bila comments in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "President Gul should take the Constitution and Ataturk's principles as his reference since he has to prove with his deeds that he is no longer an AKP member. The essence of the Turkish Republic's philosophy is secularism and national unity. This philosophy also has given rise to two opposing ideologies. One movement calls for a religion-based state model as opposed to the secular system while the other calls for ethnic-based structuring as opposed to national unity. It is very important that President Gul, as the representative of the

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Turkish Republic, make no concession on these two very basic principles. In other words, when it comes to secularism and national unity, being impartial is out of question. As Turkey's president, Gul has to take sides with those fundamental republican principles."

Ertugrul Ozkok comments in the mainstream daily Hurriyet: "The 11th President of Turkey has a great and historic mission if he wants it. By showing a sincere commitment to secularism, he can create a unified feeling. He has enough ability and the right kind of personality to make this happen. And if that happens, things will be a lot easier than ever before for the ruling AKP. But if he starts acting like a president who approves everything along the lines of the AKP ideology, Turkey will miss a unique chance for popular consensus. The Prime Minister made a promise to elect a president through consensus, yet he did not keep his promise. Now we have to hope that Gul's deeds will show him to be a man of his word."

Ali Bayramoglu writes in the Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak: "Compared to all the former presidents, Gul emerges as a man of the people. He represents Turkish people and politics as opposed to others who were representing the regime and the system. Turkey is now moving toward a new era with a brand-new civilian constitution, bringing to an end the post-military coup period that began September 12, 1980. There may be some opposing voices here and there, but we should not pay too much attention to that. Transformation and democracy will eventually prevail."

ADL Insistent on Recognizing "Genocide"
Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Star and others: Papers report that the National Director of the US Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Abraham Foxman, said that they will continue referring to 1915 Armenian incidents as "genocide." In his recent article published in The Jewish Advocate magazine and on the ADL's webpage, Foxman said they will object to a genocide resolution in the US Congress, but referred to the incidents as "genocide," once again.

TV Highlights
NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Thousands in Kayseri, Abdullah Gul's hometown, celebrate the new president, singing and dancing in the city square.
- Turkish historians said in a statement the head of Turkish History Institution Professor Yusuf Halacoglu was not acquainted with ethnic issues and that his racist attitudes are the only explanation for his allegations that Kurds in Turkey were in fact converted Armenians or Turkmen.
- Around 90,000 workers in Turkey's textile and communication sectors threaten to go on strike.

International News

- PKK-linked PJAK militants have clashed with the Kurdish peshmerge in Suleymaniye's Pencven region in northern Iraq.
- American troops raided a Baghdad hotel Tuesday night and took away about 10 people including the members of an Iranian delegation visiting Baghdad to negotiate contracts with the Iraqi government.
- On Tuesday, foreign firefighters and aircraft joined in battling wildfires in Greece where the death toll from five days of blazes rose to at least 64.
- The Turkish Red Crescent sent two trucks loaded with humanitarian

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aid to the Ipsala border gate on the Turkish-Greek border, but the trucks were pulled back after 48 hours when Greece declined to allow them in.

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